



**The Secretary of State's**

# Register of Culturally Significant Property



**Selected Property Briefs**



---

# REGISTER OF CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PROPERTY

The Department of State owns or has under long-term lease over 3,500 properties at 265 posts worldwide. Among these are approximately 150 properties that are historically, architecturally, or culturally significant. Building types include chanceries, residences, office buildings, staff apartments, a gardener's house, and a guesthouse. The Department also has a significant collection of fine and decorative arts in its inventory.

These seven criteria were used to evaluate properties for listing by the Secretary of State in the register:

- Designation or Acknowledgement by a Government as a Significant Property
- Part of the United States' Overseas Heritage
- Association with a Significant Historical Event or Person
- Important Architecture and/or by an Important Architect
- Distinctive Theme or Assembly
- Unique Object or Visual Feature
- Archaeological Site

The Secretary's Register is similar to the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary of State's Register is an important initiative to commemorate our significant international heritage and to promote and preserve American history and architecture.



SECRETARY OF STATE



---

# Winfield House

*London, England*



Situated adjacent to Regent's Park, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James emanates power and grace. Heiress Barbara Hutton built this country manor in 1936. On the recommendation of Lord Louis Mountbatten, she hired the English architectural firm of Wimperis, Simpson, and Guthrie to design her house. Hutton named the red-brick Georgian styled house after her grandfather F.W. (Winfield) Woolworth who had founded the stores where any item could be purchased for five or ten cents.

During World War II Winfield House was used as a Royal Air Force officers' club, and then as a convalescent home for Canadian servicemen. After the war Hutton offered it to the United States government to be used as the ambassador's residence for the price of one American dollar.

The residence is among the properties contributing to the Regent's Park historic district established by the commissioners for the Crown Estates. Its twelve-acre private garden within the city limits of London is second in size only to that of Buckingham Palace. A ninety-nine year lease was negotiated with the landlord Crown Estates. Extensive renovations prepared the residence for its new role as a stage for diplomacy. On their first night in Winfield House, January 18, 1955, Ambassador and Mrs. Winthrop Aldrich hosted a ball for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.

In the early 1970s, Ambassador and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg refurbished the residence in a grand style that included installing eighteenth century hand-painted Chinese wallpaper in the garden room. Winfield House stands as a tangible symbol of the uniquely close relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

(Property No. R04004)

---

# Schoenborn Palace

*Prague, Czech Republic*



The American Embassy in the Schoenborn Palace in Prague has a long and complex history of adaptations to accommodate a wide range of royal, noble, and governmental owners. Today the dominant image dates to 1718 when the Colloredo family renovated the building to the design of the expatriate Italian architect Giovanni Santini.

Five medieval residences and a malthouse were combined together by various owners in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The building's Renaissance past is preserved in the courtyard stair tower, the geometric stucco ceilings, and the entrance portal with its rough stone set in a diamond "bossage" pattern. In 1643 Rudolph, Count of Colloredo-Wallsee, purchased the property from Emperor Ferdinand. He carried out a remodeling project that unified the street façade with classical elements, created airy apartment wings behind, and transformed the vineyards on the slope of the hill into a geometrical terrace garden. The garden pavilion, called the Glorietta, was converted from a winepress into an open-air belvedere with majestic views of the city.

Following ownership and renovation by the Colloredos, the Schoenborn family inherited the property in 1794. The elegant and romantic English garden is basically unchanged from the first decade of the nineteenth century. During the year before the Republic of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed in 1918, Franz Kafka occupied two rooms "high and beautiful, red and gold, almost like Versailles" in the Schoenborn Palace.

Carl Johann Schoenborn sold the property to Chicago plumbing millionaire Richard Crane, Czechoslovakia's first American diplomat. Then in 1924, the United States government purchased the property from Crane for use as an American Legation.

The view to the Schoenborn Palace gardens from the Prague Castle has been an important part of the city character for generations. It has been said the illuminated American flag, flying atop the Glorietta, has provided hopeful inspiration during times of limited political freedom.

(Property No. X01001)

---

---

# Palazzo Margherita and Twin Villas

*Rome, Italy*



The Palazzo Margherita, the U.S. Embassy office building in Rome, was designed by Gaetano Koch and built between 1886 and 1890 for Prince Boncompagni Ludovisi.

The building incorporated Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi's residence that had been erected in the seventeenth century. The palazzo, later named after the beloved Queen Mother Margherita who took up residence at the beginning of the twentieth century, remained the center of society in Rome until her death in 1926. During Mussolini's dictatorship, the spacious royal chambers were partitioned into utilitarian offices for the National Fascist Confederation of Farmers.

In 1946, the United States purchased the palazzo to accommodate embassy expansion using Italian lire war credits against U.S. surplus army property. The U. S. government had already acquired other royal residences in the adjacent Twin Villas for the first American Legation in Rome. Between 1949 and 1952, the palazzo was extensively renovated restoring rooms to their earlier grandeur, modernizing plumbing and heating systems, and increasing office space.

Under an adjacent modern building are 2,000-year-old Roman Imperial fresco paintings preserved in an underground passageway. Recent conservation, supported in part by the World Monuments Fund, has reversed biological damage caused by adverse environmental conditions.

It has been observed that in a city where history is such a visible part of the landscape and so highly valued, the American diplomatic presence has been enhanced by association with this landmark.

(Property Nos. X01000, X01001, X01004, X01005, X01006, X01007)



---

## Seoul Old American Legation

*Seoul, South Korea*



The Seoul Old American Legation, built in 1883 and now used as a guesthouse, is an exceptionally well preserved example of traditional Korean residential architecture.

Lucius Foote, the first resident envoy from the West to arrive in Korea, purchased this picturesque house one year after its construction. Among the first American legations, and the first in Korea, this house has been in possession of the United States government longer than any other U.S. residence.

The property was once part of what is now the Duksoo Palace, and is said to be the first property in Korea to have been sold to a foreigner.

Originally serving as both home and office of America's representative, it has been acknowledged by the Korean people as a symbol of freedom against aggressors.

Situated at the entrance to the Ambassador's stately landscaped residential grounds, the Seoul Old American Legation quietly greets arriving guests.

(Property No. X02014)

---

# Hôtel de Talleyrand

*Paris, France*



The Hôtel de Talleyrand is a superb example of eighteenth century French architecture as well as a monument to European and American political and social history.

The hotel's neoclassical design represents collaboration between Jacques-Ange Gabriel and Jean-François Chalgrin. Chalgrin, who was also the architect of the Arc de Triomphe, designed the entrance court wall and the interior. The limestone exterior is a significant component of Gabriel's grand urban scheme for the Place Louis XV, now called the Place de la Concorde. The exterior is protected by the Monuments Historiques et Batiments de France.

Shortly after the establishment of the First Republic this hotel particular became the residence of the French statesman Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, who as Minister of Foreign Affairs, plotted Napoleon's foreign policy and ultimately his fate.

During World War II the Vichy government requisitioned the hotel, as did the Germans following the fall of France. The façade has bullet holes purposely left ragged, and in the basement there are detention cells labeled in German.

Purchased after the war by the U.S. government from Baron Guy de Rothschild, the building served as headquarters for the Marshall Plan. Western Europe came to rely on the plan to "assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there could be no political stability and no assured peace." Winston Churchill described this plan as the most unselfish act in history.

The Hôtel de Talleyrand is currently used for Consular Affairs, the U.S. Information Service, and several other agency offices. The first floor reception rooms are used for cultural events, conferences, and other activities promoting closer ties between the United States and France.

(Property No. X04004)



---

## Tangier Old Legation

*Tangier, Morocco*



The Tangier Old Legation, the first property acquired by the United States government for a diplomatic mission, was presented in 1821 as a gift to the American people by Sultan Moulay Suliman. His generosity was inspired by the success of the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship. This 1786 treaty, with John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as signatories, was renegotiated by John Mulowny in 1836. The treaty, still in force today, is among the most durable in American history.

The Cape Spartel Lighthouse Treaty of 1860, negotiated in the Old Legation, is considered to be the forerunner of the League of Nations and United Nations because it speaks to a broad cooperation within international law.

Located within the ancient city walls, the Legation compound was enlarged during 1927-31. It is a harmonious blend of Moorish and Spanish architectural traditions. World War II activity included a major U.S. military contribution to the allied presence in Africa at the strategic entrance to the Mediterranean. The property was used by the then newly formed Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and was the locus of military planning operations in North Africa that lead to the landings in France and Italy. When the Consulate General moved to Tangier in 1961 the property became an Arabic language school.

Since 1976 the compound has been leased to the Tangier-American Legation Museum Society. The museum maintains a collection of engravings, maps, rare books, aquatints, paintings, and other artifacts depicting events in the history of over 180 years of U.S. and Moroccan diplomatic relations.

(Property No. X21022)

---

## Ambassador's Residence

*Tokyo, Japan*



The residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Japan, with its spacious reception rooms and large garden, offers serenity in the center of downtown Tokyo.

In 1925 the U.S. government acquired the estate of Prince Ito Hirokuni, son of Japan's first Prime Minister, from the Japanese government for \$115,000. Two years earlier, an earthquake and subsequent fire had destroyed the prince's residence along with the adjacent U.S. Embassy buildings.

American H. Van Burren Magonigle and Czech-born Antonin Raymond designed the residence along with the chancery. Raymond had come to Tokyo to work for Frank Lloyd Wright on the Imperial Hotel. Structural Engineer Tachu Naito from Tokyo University, well known for his work on the Tokyo Tower, advised on seismic protection and fire prevention. The residence is a blend of Moorish and Asian stylistic influences with colonial overtones. Raymond replanned the garden and driveway to obtain the northwest entrance prescribed by Asian philosophy of Wind and Water for well being.

This residence was among the first houses built by the United States specifically as an ambassador's residence, and one of the first projects of the new Foreign Services Building Commission set up by President Herbert Hoover. Dubbed "Hoover's Folly" at the time, the chancery and the residence with imported Georgia walnut wall panels and Vermont marble flooring, were completed during The Depression at a cost of \$1.25 million dollars.

During World War II the compound was under the protection of the Swiss government. From 1945 to 1951 General Douglas MacArthur lived in what his staff called "The Big House." On September 27, 1945 Emperor Hirohito came to the residence to speak with MacArthur. The next day a photograph of their meeting in the living room was printed on the front page of every paper in Japan. It conveyed the new, subordinate position of their "living god." Hirohito had renounced his divinity, forever altering how the Imperial family was viewed in Japan.

(Property No. X03005)

---

## Palacio Bosch

*Buenos Aires, Argentina*



The residence of the U.S. ambassador to Argentina was designed by French architect René Sergent for Ernesto Bosch and his wife Elisa de Alvear. After representing his country in Germany, the United States, and France, Bosch was Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Palacio Bosch was built between 1912 and 1917. André Carlhian, a specialist in traditional French classicism, was responsible for the interiors. Achille Duchêne designed the garden with its sophisticated geometry. Lanús y Hary oversaw construction since the architect never actually visited Argentina.

Because of its stylistic unity and contextual relation to its environs, this residence is often considered Sergent's finest work. The façade echoes the small temple opposite in Palermo Park. Grandiloquent interior rooms, around a central stone staircase, overlook the garden.

The building was seminal to Argentine architectural taste. Original drawings of the Palacio Bosch were published in *Revista de Arquitectura*, Argentina's primary architectural magazine of the period. Working again with Duchêne, Sergent designed the Palacio Errázuriz (now the Museum of Decorative Arts) and the Palacio "Sans Souci" in Buenos Aires. Inspired by French 18th century classicism, his buildings can also be found in France, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, and the United States.

Bosch sold the residence to the United States government in 1929 following recurrent propositions by U.S. Ambassador Robert Wood Bliss. Some of the furniture preserved in the residence was donated by Ambassador Bliss. The Palacio Bosch is designated historic property by the Buenos Aires municipality and the Argentine Republic.

(Property No. X02002)

---

## Ambassador's Residence

*Hanoi, Vietnam*



The Ambassador's residence in Hanoi is genteel and elegantly Parisian. The façade is defined by tall windows, wrought iron balconies, and a high-style slate mansard roof punctuated with dormers. It was designed by M. LaCollonge, Principal Architect and Chief of Civil Construction Service in Tonkin. The house was built in 1921 by Indochina Public Property, part of the French colonial government, for Indochina Financial Governors who lived here until 1948. The house was then assigned, until 1954, to the highest-ranking Indochina Tariff Officer.

When the French left South East Asia in 1954, Vietnamese government officials moved in. Vice Minister Phan Ke Toai was the last occupant, and at his death the house became the headquarters for the Committee for Foreign Culture Exchange. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs press office was located in the building until 1994. The residence was included in an exchange of property between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1995. Its recent renovation preserves the property's historical integrity.

This architecturally significant property contributes to the campaign to maintain the ambiance of Hanoi's past and reflects vestiges of a long period in Vietnam's history.

(Property No. R02001)

---

# Villa Otium

*Oslo, Norway*



The Ambassador's Residence in Oslo, built in 1911, was designed by renowned Norwegian architect Henrik Bull for Hans Andreas Olsen, the Norwegian Consul General at St. Petersburg and his wife Ester, the niece of Alfred Nobel. The building recalls a Russian palace the family admired. Its grand scale and opulent detail speak of the wealth the family acquired in the petroleum business in Czarist Russia.

The three-story villa is stylistically Art Nouveau, or Jugendstyle. The asymmetrical, yet balanced composition is elegantly drafted. Bull, who also designed the National Theater and the Historical Museum in Oslo, was Norway's leading architect at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Villa Otium represents his most important residence. A significant portion of its furnishings was purchased from Jacques Bodart in Paris. The surrounding garden preserves the connection of architecture and nature even though now reduced in size by three-quarters. The property comprises the old "Otium," or park meant for leisure. Mrs. Olsen sold the property to the United States Government in 1924 — the \$125,000 price reportedly making it the most expensive American residence abroad at the time and requiring Congressional approval.

The Norwegian Preservation Agency has identified the Villa Otium as significant historical architecture.

(Property No. X2002)



---

# New Delhi Chancery

*New Delhi, India*



The New Delhi Chancery, built in the 1950's during the heyday of American foreign building, represents the first major embassy building project approved during the Eisenhower years. It was a time when American foreign policy was aimed to support free people resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities, or by outside pressures.

The Chancery was designed by master architect Edward Durell Stone who captured history and fantasy in a way that made a memorable symbol of United States commitment to India after its independence.

The Embassy is a hallmark example of modernist philosophy by Stone, one of the earliest exponents of the International Style. It is a well-proportioned box formally standing on a podium - a simple isolated object in open space. Internal organization is radial. Smaller enclosed uniform offices ring around a shimmering pool punctuated by floating green islands. The use of water and the open-air central pool recall Mogul gardens of earthly paradise. The exterior glass curtain wall is protected by a vivid and climatically responsive sunscreen. There is an honest use of natural materials (terrazzo, teak, concrete, aluminum) pragmatically fitted together without extravagance. Characteristically the chancery expresses the American preference for efficiency and straightforwardness.

Described as "tour de force" and appearing in the popular press and many architectural journals, the New Delhi Chancery together with Stone's other large portfolio of work had a major impact upon architectural education during the 1950's. Among his award-winning projects are the original Museum of Modern Art in New York, the U.S. Pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels, and the National Geographic Headquarters and Kennedy Center both in Washington DC.

Nehru, one of the country's founding leaders, praised the design. Frank Lloyd Wright said it is the only embassy to do credit to the United States and opined it should be called the "Taj Maria" to give credit to Stone's wife and muse.

In India the Chancery continues to observe the type of consideration afforded historical landmarks, as appreciation for the preservation of modernist architecture grows worldwide.

(Property No. X1001)



---

## Tirana Embassy

*Tirana, Albania*



Built in 1929, Embassy Tirana is reported to be one of the first American Legations constructed under the 1926 Porter Legislation that established the State Department's ability to provide American government buildings, embassies, and consular buildings in foreign countries.

Originally the ambassador also resided here, conducting business in a domestic setting.

Architects Wyeth and Sullivan were well-respected Washington, DC architects known for their stately Connecticut Avenue townhouses for wealthy clients. Nathan Wyeth (1870 - 1963) had been trained in Paris, receiving a diploma from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts at the turn of the century. Inspiration was drawn from 18th century Virginia tidewater plantation homes such as Mount Vernon. Wyeth also designed the first Oval Office in the White House for William Howard Taft in 1909.

Following World War II, Albania focused inward and during the Cold War the house and quiet landscaped gardens were rented to the Italian Ambassador. There was no American presence until diplomatic relations were re-established nearly thirty years later.

Aimed at preserving the property's historical character, after recent remodeling and new additions, the once simple home is fitted out as efficient and unique office space. Specially designed furniture and other antiques have been refurbished and reused, creating understated, but pragmatic elegance.

(Property Nos. X01000, X01001)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Overseas Buildings Operations  
Cultural Resources Committee  
OBO/PE/DE/ADB  
1701 North Fort Myer Drive  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Tel: 703 875 7182  
Fax: 703 875 4548

The Cultural Resources Committee serves as a multi-disciplinary working group that identifies historically, architecturally, and culturally significant property, maintains an inventory of significant overseas properties, clarifies protection standards and guidelines, and serves as a resource for the Department.





**Department of State Publication 11192**  
**Bureau of Overseas Building Operations**  
**Released June 2005**